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B O S T O N U N I V E R S I T Y

GRADUATE SCHOOL

T H E S I S

SPANISH MYSTIC LITERATURE

Submitted by

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(A. B. Boston University, 1927.)

In partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Teresa de Jesús, Saint, 1515-1582
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Juan de la Cruz, Saint, 1542-1591
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Mysticism
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"Las Relaciones Espirituales"

"Las Fundaciones"

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For eight hundred long and arduous years, Spain fought for her creed - a religious war that had as its source an innate faith, a desire to believe, and an indestructible vitality. For eight hundred years Spain consecrated herself to the purpose of effacing all other creeds from within her confines. Arab and Jew were persecuted with unfailing vigour, and finally, the infidel expelled, at the end of the fifteenth century, Catholicism ruled with an iron hand. All Spain united to root out Islamism and Judaism so that the Catholic Church might triumph. To tolerate another creed was in itself heresy. Contradictory creeds cannot all be acceptable to God. For Spain, Catholicism was the only faith, the true faith. It was her moral obligation, therefore, to oppress the followers and extinguish the very fires of any other.

Defending the faith, Spain defended herself and became a nation. A national consciousness developed which had at its basis a religious consciousness. Today, as then, the Spaniard's devotion to his faith is the common factor - a bond that has held throughout all of the powerful influences which tend to and have in many cases caused disintegration. The country is criss-crossed by mountains. The natures of the people differ. Spain has managed to maintain a certain unity, and its unifying power is its profound reverence for its religion. It is not strange, therefore, to find throughout Spanish literature a predominance of the religious element.

The Reformation served as an added incentive to an already passionate devotion and is, perhaps, the immediate cause of the great age of Spanish mysticism. Mystics have existed everywhere,

in every creed, from the visions of Moses and the prophets, among Orthodox and Heterodox, Protestants and Catholics, Pagans and Christians, Greeks and Hindoos. To be in close communion with his Maker has been the goal of Man since the beginning of Time. It was at this time, with the added incentive of opposition to an already super-sensitive religious consciousness that Mysticism flourished in Spain, giving us the literature of the Spanish mystics, poetry, even when written in prose, sincere, keen, absorbing. It is the true philosophy of Spain in a treasury of poetry and idealism.

The root of the word mysticism is the Greek μύέω meaning to shut one's self up, to retire into the recesses of one's own consciousness. Mysticism, then, is the name given to the phase of thought or feeling which tries to grasp the divine essence or the ultimate reality of things, and which has as its purpose the actual communication with God. The mystic recognizes the existence of an intuitive faculty whose function is, to see pure, abstract and ideal truth, and within whose power is the ability to meet "in the holy science of its retreats the form of that Infinite Being who walks there in the evening and makes his voice heard in the mysterious whispers that breathe over its plains."#

Of necessity, mystical literature, having for its theme an intangible idea, is intelligible, often only to the person experiencing it and is, at times, hard to comprehend. But the beauty of its fantastical phraseology and originality gives it a distinct

#"Mystics and Their Creed" - Second Edition. London.
Chapter on "Hours with the Mystics" by Robert A. Vaughn. Page 203.

charm. The true mystic lives in a world whose very essence is spiritual and the abundance of imagery gives a literature that is unrivalled for pure beauty of expression. When to this is added clearness of psychological analyses and interpretations, the result satisfies most fully a universal desire for truth and beauty in literature.

Of the three hundred mystical and ascetical writers that Spain has produced, I have chosen for study "Santa Teresa de Jesús" and "San Juan de la Cruz". In them, mysticism reaches the heights of beauty. Luis de Granada, Juan de los Ángeles, Juan de Ávila, Pedro Malón de Chaide and many others did not inspire me. Luis de Leon's treatment of the "Song of Solomon" pleased me immensely, yet could not be compared with the transcendental element in Juan de la Cruz's "Subida del Monte Carmelo" and so I found Santa Teresa and San Juan adequate for an appreciation of Spanish Mystic literature.

Teresa Sánchez Cepeda de Ávila y Ahumada, known to the world by her conventual name of Teresa de Jesús, was born March 23rd, 1515 in Ávila, Spain. Her parents were noble, kind, and devout Catholics. Childhood fantasies were dominated with the power of God. The next world was to her an accepted fact. The innate Spanish faith, a religious background, coupled with an imaginative mind produced the pearl of Spanish mysticism, and perhaps the greatest woman writer that Spain has ever known.

At twelve, shortly after the loss of her mother and after an unhappy affair with a boy to whom she became attached, she attended the Augustine convent of Santa María de Gracia. Against her father's will, she decided to become a nun and was admitted in 1533 into a

Carmelite convent.

At this time she is described as being beautiful, with dark hair, a bright complexion and brilliant dark eyes that sparkled. Convent life, however, broke down her health. She was sent to Bedeza for a change of atmosphere. Here she converted her confessor, who was leading a life not unusual in celibate priests of the time, but certainly, not sanctioned. Her health improved slowly. She attributes her recovery to the intercession of St. Joseph. On her return to the convent, she began to have many visions and ecstacies of prayer. Her confessor told her they were delusions of the devil. She had cataleptical seizures which deprived her of consciousness and on one occasion lay for four days without moving and was about to be buried when she regained consciousness.

In 1556, the Jesuit General Francis of Borgia came to Avila and declared her raptures to procede from God and gave orders that she be encouraged in them. Her visions were numerous. The best known is that of an angel with beautiful and burning face who holds in his hand a long, golden, iron-pointed spear. This he thrust into her heart and drew out with it her heart and all that was within her, leaving her on fire with the love of God.

The conventual life she was leading was not strict enough. She felt herself capable of greater martyrdom and decided to found a stricter convent. In 1562 papal consent was procured and the convent of Saint Joseph was begun. The prioress of the old convent was in a fury at such rebellion and threatened to cause trouble. Teresa managed to pacify her and soon convent followed convent until the number established for women became seventeen, and the

number established for men with the help of Juan de la Cruz, fifteen. All this was done during her lifetime.

In 1577 she returned to her original convent as prioress. The Inquisition, ever ready to suspect, forbade more progress, fearing more power, and distrusting her revelations and their power to glorify her in the minds of the people. Trouble between the old and new Carmelite orders followed. She was confined by Nuncio, but was released by Phillip I and became unrestricted ruler of the reformed order she had organized. In 1582 she died at Alba, 68 years old. In 1662 she was canonized by Gregory XV.

The works of Santa Teresa may be divided into three categories: Historical, in which she relates what she has done, comprising the "Libro de su Vida", "Relaciones" and "Fundaciones"; Preceptive, in which she ordains what is to be done, comprising the "Constituciones Primitivas", the "Avisos" and the "Modo de Visitar los Conventos". In this category may be included the "Estatuos Particulares", regulations for the convent of Soria, and the instructions for the foundation of Caravaca. The last and most important group comprises the ascetic and doctrinal works--the "Camino de Perfeccion", "Los Conceptos de Amor Divino" and "Las Moradas".

The "Libro de su Vida" - The book of her life, a frank, honest biography, portrays clearly the process of her developement. It was written at the instigation of her confessor and is permeated with divine faith and love in God. Keen observations go side by side with her devotion. Speaking of the unfortunate three months

of her entire life spent frivolously (which she regrets!) she says, "Por aqui entiendo el gran provecho que hace la buena compañia; y tengo por cierto que si tratara en aquella edad con personas virtuosas que estuviera entera en la virtud; porque si en esta edad tuviera quien me ensenara a temer a Dios, fuera tomando fuerzas el alma para no caer". # We call it the value of early training, whether treating of religion or virtue, in strengthening character. To a mystic like Santa Teresa, religious perfection was the only goal and everything aimed at it. But her psychology is sound, even though her applications of it may differ from ours.

Four characteristics stand out in this biography. The religious life of the writer, the quality of the style, the immense instructive potentialities and the invincible faith of the mystic in her revelations. It was this latter that brought the censorship of the Inquisition.

Friar Domingo Banes gives his heartiest aprobations to the work, except for her visions, which (#) he says are too prone to be understood by women as coming from God, and too frequent. He gives due credit to the goodness of her intentions, her sincere and devout nature; he merely believes it wiser to put little faith in revelations but rather trust more in the prayers and virtue of the woman. Her advisor, (##) Friar Juan de Avila, knowing well the human nature, also advised the non-encouragement of visions, fearing that they become a habit and doubting their intrinsic value as the word

Page 25. "Libro de su Vida" in Vol. 54 of "Biblioteca de Autores Espanoles".

(#) Aprobacion del Maestro Fray Domingo Ibanez. p. 132. Biblioteca de Autores Espanoles. Vol. 54.

(##) Carta del Venerable Maestro Avila. p. 133-134. Idem.

of God. The mystic, however, had reached the heights. Her revelations were experienced by her alone and, hence, her judgement alone was valid. She had spoken with God. The spirit of devotion to spiritual life and love of God, maintaining a doctrine of blind obedience to ecclesiastical authority is the dominating impression. In this age of crass materialism, the opposite extreme is beneficial. It is the life of a Saint, told by a Saint in a saintly manner.

"Las Relaciones Spirituales" is a collection of the cummunications of Santa Teresa relating the state of her soul, her visions. They are intimate glimpses of life and spirit. Especially in the two written to Padre Rodorigo Alvarez de la Compañia de Jesus, the matter of her visions enters continually.

The "Fundaciones" is a purely historical work narrating the beginnings of the convent of Saint Joseph del Carmen de Medina del Campo. It is told from the personal point of view, giving her inspirational revelations and many warnings and instructions. Neither of the last two mentioned are as interesting as the "Libro de su Vida", or as important.

The second group is of interest to the layman, only as an object of idle curiousity and as a work of Santa Teresa. "Las Constituciones" contains the vital precepts of the order and lays down the rules and regulations by which the inhabitants of the monastery must abide. The general principles of common ownership, seclusion, sacrifice, and devotion are emphasized. It is, therefore, of little literary value since the nature of the books is purely informatory. The devout nature of the author pervades this book, as all others.

It is in the "Avisos", however, that Santa Teresa lays bare to us her depth of understanding and clarity of judgement. She is as discreet as she is expert. Her counsels are not new to us but show a remarkable knowledge of people--

"La tierra que no es labrada elevara albrojas y espinas aunque sea fertil; ansi el entendimiento del hombre."

"Nunca afirme cosas sin saberlo primero"

"De Ninguna cosa hacer burlas". (#)

"Jamas hagas cosa que no puedas hacer delante de todas".

"No hagas comparacion de uno a otro, porque es cosa odiosa". (##)

"Mirar bien cuan presto se mudan las personas y cuan poco hay que fiar en ellas, y ansi asirse bien de Dios que no se muda". (###)

The absolute faith she has in God and in the power of prayer is the keynote of all her books and so she advises, "En tiempo de tristeza y turbacion, no dejes las buenas obras que solias hacer de oracion y penetencia; porque el demonio procura inquietarle, porque las dejes-antes tengas mas que solias, y veras cuan presto el Señor te favorece." (####) Her parting word echoes the dominating note of her being. "Tu deseo sea de ver a Dios; tu temor se le has de perder; tu dolor que no le gozas; y tu gozo de lo que te puede llevar alla y viveras con gran paz." (#####)

(#) "Los Avisos" in Biblioteca de Autores Españoles. Vol. 54 p. 285

(##) The same p. 286

(###) The same p. 287

(####) The same p. 285

(#####) The same p. 288.

Evidences of the mysticism of Santa Teresa are many; evidences of her cynicism are not so abundant. People, she says, change quickly and are not to be trusted. Trust therefore in God who does not change. Strange to find a cynic in a mystic? Indeed, no. Hermits withdraw from the society of their fellow men to bask in the sunshine of a trustworthy and unfailing God. Whether the same principle of faith can be applied to our earthly companions with the same success is an unanswerable question but one worthy of some consideration. Santa Teresa, however, finds her only consolation in her Maker and her profundity of knowledge is admirable.

The treatise on the "Modo de Visitar los Conventos de Religiosas" is like the "Constituciones" - clear and concise; practical and informative.

The third group or division of Santa Teresa's works is extremely interesting for they present to us her spiritual beliefs and doctrines as she practised them during her lifetime and as she professed them to the nuns at whose request she wrote them. The "Camino de Perfección", the "Road to Perfection" is the road or method by which contemplative prayer is achieved. As an instructive work it is of little interest to the Sunday churchgoer or the logical materialist, but as a character study and mode of living it is made intriguing and beautiful by the wealth of the author's imagery. The work abounds in similes and metaphors that bring clearly and quickly to the reader's mind what would otherwise be mere words.

Santa Teresa wrote the "Camino de Perfección" at the insistence of her nuns, as I have said. Another cause was the inroads of Lutheranism at the time. Absolute obedience to ecclesiastical dogma is em-

is emphasized throughout the book, though it does not add to its beauty. Poverty and seclusion consel Santa Teresa. Love not each other for such a state leads to preference on the basis of exterior graces, "Que, si la voluntad se inclinare más a una que a otra (que esto no podrá ser menos, que es natural, y muchas veces lleva este a amor la más ruin, si tiene más gracias de naturaleza) que nos vamos mucho a la mano, a no nos dejar enseñorear de aquella aficion. A menos las virtudes y lo bueno exterior y siempre con estudio trayamos cuidado de apartarnos de hacer caso de este exterior." (#) Love of God is the only love to be encouraged. "No consintamos sea esclava de nadie nuestra voluntad, sino del que la compró por su sangre" (##) For this reason Santa Teresa ordained silence and seclusion and did away with all possible diversions or temptations. Communion with God is the sole worthwhile purpose in life and all must be sacrificed for it. Stoicism, uncomplaining sorrow - even great illness must be borne mutely as did Christ on the Cross. Death is freedom and should be welcomed. Like Montaigne she reasons that it awaits us at every corner- and like a true mystic she hails it with joy. "Enfin, todo lo que tiene fin no hay que hacer caso de ello, y de la vida mucho menos; pues no hay dia seguro y pensando que cada dia es el postrero quien no le trabajaria si pensase no ha de vivir más de aquel?" (###) Humility is a most necessary virtue. For though God rewards his servants, yet

(#) "Camino de Perfeccion" in Biblioteca de Autores Españoles. Vol.54 P. 323.

(##) Idem. P. 324

(###) Same P. 333

humbleness keeps away the demon of pride in such reward. Charity should not be without thought, lest you pamper people in their vices. "Oh! por amor de Dios, que mireis mucho en esto! a ninguna le mueva indiscreta caridad para mostrar lástima de la otra en caso que toque a estos fingidos agravios." (#)

The method of prayer is preceeded by forewarnings of the rarity of actual success, as well as consolation for those who unfortunately cannot reach the goal through the appreciation of the Lord by vocal prayer, and finally contemplative prayer and communion. The whole being is lost in the divine joy of the latter and for those in the various degrees of progress towards it, glimpses of it enlighten the road. Santa Teresa compares her goal to water which has three attributes. It makes cold. In this wise, when it comes from the earth, it cannot put out the flames of heavenly devotion. When it is from Heaven it is the fountain from whence comes our tears. Water cleanses. Heavenly water cleanses and purifies the soul. It is always needed because temptation is with us always. Thirdly, it quenches thirst. On this last quality, the author is brilliant. Thirst is the desire for the needed thing of which the non-aquirement is fatal, and of which the over-acquirement also is fatal. "Extraña cosa es, que, si nos falta nos mata, y si nos sobra nos acaba la vida, como se ve morir muchos ahogados". (##). And she ends this chapter with a prayer to be allowed to search for and perhaps find the blessed goal. "Denos el Señor, que la promete gracia para buscarla como se ha de buscar, por quien su Majestad es." (###). The soul should walk in its inner recesses where there is a golden palace set with precious stones. This symbolizes

(#) Same. P. 334

(##) and (###) Same P. 343.

a pure soul of which the virtues are the gems. Within the palace is the King or Father on a throne of great value - the heart. The beauty of the external world is totally eclipsed by the exquisite perfection of the inner. Santa Teresa examines in detail and expounds upon the worth of the Lord's prayer, repeating the virtues and method necessary for attaining "La Perfeccion".

In the "Conceptos del Amor de Dios" the writer interprets in the extreme symbolical those lines from the "Song of Songs" of Solomon which she judges difficult to understand correctly. She sees in it her own teachings and beliefs. The Song is in praise of God; the peace which communion with him brings; the delight and joy derived from having God in the soul in silent prayer; the confidence which is given to this love of God when it is sheltered by the Divinity - a protection God is accustomed to give to those who love him and suffer for him. Once more, Santa Teresa maintains her high standard of style as well as of thought.

It is, however, in her last work, "Las Moradas" or "El Castillo Interior", that she is sublime; not only in religious feeling but in glorious expression. She was sixty-two when she wrote it, an old woman, worn out with physical suffering; half-paralyzed, one arm broken, persecuted and harassed. Surely, strength to write amidst such sorrow must have come from her eternal love of God, giving her a divine force. Her courage had no need to be replenished; it was everlasting. She was urged by her confessor to give to her nuns what they needed and asked for: information concerning prayer. Her language was easily comprehended, and the great esteem in which she was held by her nuns would lead to fuller compliance with her laws. Where-

fore, it became her duty to write "Las Moradas" - the "Dwelling Places." She feared lest she do nothing but repeat since she could do naught but write her same beliefs, "antes temo que han de ser casi todas las mesmas, porque asi como las pajaras que enseñan a hablar, no saben mas de lo que las muestran u oyen, y esto repiten muchas veces, so yo al pie de la letra" (#). But if she does repeat her thoughts, they are embellished in ever new phraseology, ingenious yet simple.

The "Moradas" are seven. The first compares our soul to a precious castle in chich there are many rooms, the door to which is prayer. In the just person, it is the paradise where he will find true delight. Penetration to the inner habitations or communion with God, is the greatest reward. Moral sin darkens the castle. "Ninguna cosa de aprovecha, y de aqui viene, que todas la s buenas obras que hiciere, estando ansi en pecado mortal, son de ningun fruto para alcanzar gloria." (##). The castle must be imagined as a palm tree, surrounded by much foliage,which symbolizes the rooms, through which the seeker must go to get the fruit. It is not good to concentrate too much in any room, but rather to go from one room to the next, and even to withdraw, in order to see by contrast how great is our lowliness and how high is His Highness. "Y a mi parecer jamas nos acabamos de conocer, si no procuramos conocer a Dios; mirando su grandeza acudamos a nuestra bajeza; y mirando su limpieza veremos nuestra suciedad; considerando su humildad, veremos cuan lejos estamos de ser humildes."(###). The first dwelling place is to know your soul

(#)"Las Moradas" in Vol. 54, of Biblioteca de Autores Españoles P.434

(##) Same. P. 436

(###) Same. P. 438

and to pray. The second dwelling place is where the callings of God are heard. Progress requires perseverence and continual combat with the Devil. The more prayer the nearer is the soul to God. Trust in the mercy of God and you will be carried from one dwelling place to the next and finally into the last where demons are not and pure joy is experienced. But until then we must pray not to be eternally obsessed by temptation. The third dwelling place is almost wholly devoid of poisonous thoughts. Prayer is compared to watering a garden. There are four ways: By dipping the hand into water and distributing it in this way. This is hard and has little effect; By a wheel raising the water and distributing it through aqueducts. This is less work with better results; By using the water from a springing well; Here it is necessary only to turn it in the right direction; By receiving rain from Heaven. The first way is the prayer of devout souls who have little spiritual reaction. The second way is by quiet or pure contemplation. The will is absorbed but the understanding and memory are still awake. The third way has complete union and perfect contemplation. All the faculties of the body and mind are suspended. The fourth way has neither the faculties of the body or soul and the individual is in a state of rapture. The soul is wholly passive and is therefore fully receptive of the Divinity. It is the highest state of perfection attainable on earth. Unfortunately it is not permanent. Human consciousness returns, but the mind is dulled to all earthly objects. The soul is filled with humility inwrought with the presence of God.

The fifth dwelling place contains souls whose prayer unites them with God and gives the consciousness that there is no deception

about this feeling. A mystic experiences leaving the soul in a state of supremacy over the body. To obey the law of God is the only security in order not to return and to continue to the still more hidden storehouses. This joy is granted to few. To the others, love of his fellowman expressed in an attempt to save his soul, is the task which they must undertake until they are worthy of communion with their Maker.

In the sixth dwelling place, God is accustomed to mete out still greater rewards and hence there are greater sufferings to undergo. Physical ills must be endured stoically and are more than repaid by the joy of speaking with God. There are many ways by which He awakens our soul; like a pleasant and continual wound; like a comet causing trembling and even crying out; a sudden delightful inflamation and many others. Much more is contained in this work concerning the manner in which God speaks and how to speak with Him; of the raptures and ecstacy experienced by those in communion with God. It is a prolix exposition of the mystical experience, and therefore unintelligible and even ludricrous at times to the reader whose fortune it has not been to have one. The sincerity and deep feeling which are behind it and the humility and devotion with which she writes are, however, without question.

The seventh dwelling place is a continuation of even greater and purer joys bestowed upon the soul of the fortunate mystic. Divine matrimony and spiritual matrimony are explained in detail. The Divine occurs after death, for then there is continual unison; the spiritual while there is yet life and must suffer occasional

separations. "Está el Rey en su palacio y hay muchas guerras en su reino, y muchas cosas penosas mas no por eso deja de estarse en su puesto; ansi acá, aunque en otras moradas anden muchas baraundas y fieras ponzoñosas, y se oye el ruido, nadie entra en aquella, que le haga quitar de allí, ni las cosas que oye; aunque le dan alguna pena no es de manera que la alboroten y quiten la paz; porque las pasiones están ya vencidas, de suerte que han miedo de entrar allí, porque salen mas rendidas."(#).

The prayer with which Santa Teresa concludes this masterpiece of mysticism is worthy of citation. "En fin hermanas mías, con lo que concluyo es, que no hagamos torres sin fundamento, que el Señor no mira tanto la grandeza de las obras, como el amor con que se hacen; y como hagamos lo que pudiéramos hará su Majestad, que vamos pudiendo cada dia más----------que su Majestad le juntara con el que hizo en la cruz por nosotros al Padre, para que tenga el valor que nuestra voluntad hubiere merecido, aunque sean pequeñas las obras." (##).

The volume is not a concise, clear, piece of work; it rambles and is, at times, contradictory and confusing. The state of Santa Teresa's health and her continual state of suffering is cause enough. Yet there is enough continuity and unity of thought to pick out the definite principles which are her beliefs.

(#) Las Moradas in Vol. 54 of Biblioteca de Autores Españoles P. 484

(##) Same. P. 489.

1. She believes in an indwelling God - infinite and personal. The divine absorbs the human soul - almost a pantheistic conception, but too personal to be so entirely.

2. She believes in Christ the spirit, divested of all local and historical fixings, and existing as a purely spiritual person - the ideal of man's soul.

3. Evil is dark negation, shadow, want, the absence of good. It is not a substantial entity to rival with God or goodness. Selfishness is sin. To abandon one's self so as to wholly forget it and become lost in God is the one way to a blessed life. Therefore, she preaches asceticism and deprivation.

4. Her spiritual doctrine is the oneness and likeness of man to God. So long as this is so, man is free. The will is free because it is actuated and informed by the spirit which is its own nature. Man is bound when he is not in union with his spirit, for then he is a slave to his animal nature.

5. The life of man is the life of his spirit which is eternal; therefore man has eternal life. Purity, holiness, worship, charity, which are part of the spiritual life are elements independent of years.

6. The material universe is symbolical of some spirit or law.

This - then - is Spain's metaphysics, Spain's philosophical creed. Emotion governs it, a logical emotion, however, for it proceeds from what it considers the greatest force in the world - - God. Pure poetry because its thought is idealistic and its language cor-

responding to its thought, is the poetry of Santa Teresa; mystical, as is to be expected, permeated with the Divinity and penetrating. For example:

"Tirome con una flecha
Enarbolada de amor
Y mi alma quedó hecha
Una con su Criador;
Ya no quiero otro amor,
Pues a mi Dios me ha entregado,
Y mi amado es para mi
Y yo soy para mi Amado." (#).

The conviction and total abnegation strike one with force. The following gives us her belief in immortality:

"Ofrezcamos de veras
A morir por Cristo todas
Y en las celestias bodas,
Estaremos placenteras;
Sigamos estas banderas
Pues Cristo va en delantera.
No hay que temer, no durmáis
Pues que no hay paz en la tierra (##).

It is fitting to conclude this study of Santa Teresa with the following verses: They are typical of her humble devotion and beautiful style:

(#)"Poesías de Santa Teresa" in Biblioteca de Autores Españoles P. 511

(##) Same P. 512

"Vuestra soy, para vos naci
¿Que mandais hacer de mi?

Soberana Majestad
Eterna sabiduria
Bondad buena a el alma mia
Dios, un ser, bondad y alteza
Mirad la suma vileza
Que hoy os canta amor asi
¿Qué quereis Señor, de mi?

Vuestra soy, pues me criastis
Vuestra pues me redimistis
Vuestra pues que me sufristis
Vuestra pues me llamasteis
Vuestra pues me conservasteis
Vuestra pues no me perdi
¿Qué quereis hacer de mi? (#)

Una Glosa

Vivo sin vivir en mi
Y tan alta vida espero,
Que muero porque no muero.

Aquesta divina union
Del amor con que yo vivo
Hace a Dios ser mi cautivo,
Y libre mi corazon;

(#) "Poesias de Santa Teresa in Biblioteca de Autores Españoles
P. 517 Vol. 54

Mas causa en mi tal pasion
Ver a Dios mi prisionero,
Que muero porque no muero. (#)

Juan de Yepes, one of the three sons of Gonzalo de Yepes and Catalina Alvárez, was born in Honterveros in 1541. At an early age, so benevolent and kind was he to all with whom he came into contact, that it seemed obvious for so charitable a nature to find its purpose in profession of this charity. When but five he fully realized and reverenced the glory of Jesus and the Virgin Mary and spoke of them with deep love and humility, asking always for their sanction. About this time occurred his first mystical experience. He fell into a well while playing and it was the assistance of the Blessed Virgin that - he said - sustained him above water until his companions became aware of his plight and rescued him. "Temprano", he says, "muy temprano le debí yo a la Virgen todo el amor de que es capaz mi alma." (##).

His Mother wished him to be a scientist, but was without funds. Alonzo Alvárez de Toledo, a man of great piety and zeal for helping the poor, realizing the injustice of the unequal distribution of wealth, had given himself and his riches to a hospital, and there did what he could to relieve pain and suffering. To this man Juan's mother made appeal, and succeeded in interesting him in her son. In short time, they became the dearest of friends, devoted to one another. To each other they were like Father and son, and to the poor whom they served, like two angels of mercy.

(#) "Biblioteca de Autores Españoles Vol. 27 P. 5.

(##) Same Vol. 27. P. 261

Their very presence alleviated pain.

Juan dedicated all his spare moments to prayer and study. The Virgin, in particular, was the object of his devotion. One day, while kneeling before her in prayer, he thought he heard her speak to him, telling him to enter the monastery of Carmen and devote his life to prayer. He was unable to resist this call, and hastened to his benefactor to obtain his release. He entered the Carmelite convent of Medina del Campo and there studied theology and philosophy; he not only satisfied but exceeded the hopes of his teacher. His fellow students and all who knew him, admired and respected the talent and progress of the youth, for his diligence was accompanied by exemplary conduct, humility and abnegation. After his studies were completed he returned to Medina, not to remain, but with the intention of changing to the order of San Bruno, a Carthusian order of monks. This project was defeated by the appearance of another way by which he could exercise the force of his spirit and find the travail that he was looking for in order to chastise his body more severely and thereby honor God the more. Santa Teresa was seeking men who would support her plans for reforming the order of the Carmelites; she heard of Juan de Yepes and came to him at Medina. In her Juan saw the image of his adored Virgin and swore to endure with her the vicissitudes of the plan. Both had brains and faith and it was not long before their mutual desires and sentiments united them in a spiritual friendship that lasted throughout their lives.

In 1568 Juan began to reform the convent of Duruelo, speak-

ing to the men of the order and telling them of the vices of the then existing conditions, in contrast with the abnegations and rigour of the founders. He followed his words with actions, choosing the most secluded cell, praying, fasting, lacerating his body, and leading the monks by his example to do likewise. His infinite faith, his indestructible hope, his charity for the sins of others commanded attention. Night and day he followed the dictates of his devout soul. All but his own welfare received his help. The indefatigable activity of this spirit was incomprehensible. A small, thin, pale, weak, sickly looking man, to be able thus to resist fatigue, astonished all. This example of deprivation and prayer brought followers and the monastery soon existed under the same harsh laws as in the days of its founders.

The fervor of Juan de la Cruz (for it was by this name that he was known since he had taken the vows) was intensified by this success. From Duruelo he went to Pastrana, thence to Alcala and then to Granada, where the most important years of his life were comsumed in this enterprise. He was confronted with jealousy, fear of loss of power, egotism, pride, on all sides. His answer was imperturbable serenity of spirit and untiring constancy in following the path of truth and justice. His sincerity disarmed his enemies; his sweet voice, the candor of his face, the enthusiam with which he spoke, the prophetic tone with which he gave his most sublime concepts, the knowledge of his virtues - all contributed to give greater force to his words,

to give eficacy to his discourse that might have been unheeded delivered by another. His voice came from his heart and soul and found the hearts and souls of his hearers.

Victim, often, as he was, of the ire of impenitent men, he controlled his hurt and never gave complaint. With Santa Teresa he exchanged successes and sufferings and in the joy of finding a soul-mate their grief vanished.

Under the charge of disobedience, Juan was taken prisoner in the convent of Toledo of the old order, and suffered untold physical tortures. Yet his greatest torment was the fear that the same fate might have victimized Santa Teresa. He managed to escape and found refuge in one of the reformed orders for women in the same town. His first question was for the welfare of Santa Teresa, then safe and at liberty, to his great joy.

Almódovar was his next retreat, where he was idolized by all. The thought of the existing unreformed state in Andalucía was a thorn in his side, however, and he left the peace and calm to accomplish his purpose of establishing more reformed orders. Jealousy, however, was rampant against him and made the last of his life miserable. In 1579 Juan de la Cruz was named rector of the Colegio de Baeza; in 1581, prior of the convent of Granada; in 1585, vicar-general of Andalucía, and first definer or governor of the order; later he was named vicar of the house of Segovia. All these honors he accepted with sincere regret and as charges to prove his love for God.

His purity was such as to find no attraction in sensuality and he repulsed with severity the advances of beautiful women. The permission to torment himself was a privilege and the opportunity to become a martyr was his greatest desire. This was granted, for his honors were taken from him; he became a hermit in the desert of Penuela and even there avarice and resulting calumny managed to follow him; he was wounded in the thigh and forced to descend to Ubeda, where he died.

The last day of his life, he is said to have been visited by an archangel who told him of his fate and consoled him not to fear, for all who lived in heaven awaited him to place upon him his well earned crown. He prepared himself, confessed, received the sacrament and told the hour of his death - the first hour of day. At the first stroke of dawn, he received benediction, and it is said that a beautiful light illumined the place obscuring that of the candles, and formed a halo around his head. A suave odour exhaled from the body; marvelous things took place, while the soul of the friar ascended to Heaven. He died December 14th, 1591. In 1674 he was canonized.

San Juan de la Cruz was not only an ascetic of great virtue and a theologian of great learning, but an exceptionally fine prose writer and poet. As a prose writer he is completely original. His prose is spiritual, profoundly mystical; at times ecstatic, or submerged in the contemplation of the absolute. All material connections are severed and we are elevated to the realms of the spirit - - a kingdom ruled by noble and generous sentiments

that know no evil. As a poet the spiritual nature of his poetry is striking, the delicacy of sentiment and beauty of expression fascinate the ear as well as the mind. There is an indescribable and inexplainable sense of awe that inspires. His poetry is an outpouring of the poet's sentiments; no foreign inspiration is necessary. Knowing how difficult it would be to penetrate in all its intensity the signification of his songs, he composed for the comprehension of the three principal ones, three commentaries, and these form with some maxims and letters the greater part of his works. They are the result not only of his exalted sentiments, but also of his vast studies and profound theological meditations.

The "Subida del Monte Carmelo" is a treatise on the method of acheiving the union of the soul with God. The work is divided into four parts called books. The first book is an elaboration of the first "cancion" and treats of what the "noche escura" is; how necessary it is to pass through it to divine union; and treats in particular of the dark night of the sense perceptions with their appetites, and of the harm they do in the soul.

"En una noche escura,
Con ansias en amores inflamada,
¡Sali sin ser notada!
Estando ya mi casa sosegada." (#).

Herein the soul tells of the happy chance whereby it was fortunate enough to free itself from the evil desires of man. For

(#) "Subida del Monte Carmelo" in Biblioteca de Autores Españoles Vol. 27 P. 5.

in order to reach perfection, the soul must pass through two kinds of nights or purgations of the soul. The first are the sense desires; the second are mental desires. On a dark night, then, the soul went out eager for the love of God, unseen by sensual desires, the body appetites calmed. A happy chance, for such an occurrence is most blessed. The process of acheiving divine union is called "dark night" for three reasons. First - because all earthly appetites must be lacking; second - because of the obscurity of the process, and third - because of the incomprehensibility of the goal - - God. San Juan quotes copiously from the Scriptures to prove the vanity of earthly goods and the harm they cause. This harm is of two sorts - positive and negative; they deprive the soul of the spirit of God, and torment and tire, darken and weaken the soul which they inhabit. Love for the spirit and love for the material cannot exist together. The earthly desires must be effaced. "En esta desnudez halla el espíritu su quietud y descanso, porque no codiciando nada, nada le fatiga hacia arriba y nada le oprime hacia abajo, porque está en el centro de su humildad; pues que cuando algo codicia en eso mismo se fatiga." (#).

The second book tells of the method to reach communion with God, which is Faith interpreted from the second canción:-

"A escuras y segura,
Por la secreta escala disfrazada,
¡Oh dichosa Ventura!
A escuras y en celada,
Estando ya mi casa sosegada." (##)

(#) "Subida del Monte Carmelo" in Biblioteca de Autores Españoles Vol.27 P.18

(##) Same P. 19

This is, of his few poems, considered the best, and in it is seen the part played by the "Song of Solomon" in the development of a very sensuous element in Spanish mysticism. Once more the soul free from sensual desire climbs the secret road to God. It is secret because all of the steps are hidden to mortal understanding. The soul is disguised because the mundane cannot recognize the divine feeling that envelops him like a cloak. The devil cannot recognize him because the light of faith is darkness to him. The soul is now without the "ansias", because the mental reasoning power is also appeased. The nice distinction is made between "noche escura" in the first "cancion" when speaking of sensual desires, and of "hoche a escuras" when speaking of the mental desires, because of the greater evil power of mental desires. Faith is the impetus of the search and the guide as well. The soul is like a window pane. If clear, the rays of the sun shine through and make the pane like a ray itself; if blotted with desires, the rays cannot come through. The rays symbolize the love of God. It is such comparisons that add beauty as well as clearness to the work and repay for the many obscurities which run riot throughout. Understanding, memory and will-power are the three potentialities of the soul and give in proportion faith, hope and charity. Only pure apprehensions of faith are of use; all those by memory, understanding, or will-power must be disregarded.

The third book treats of the purgation and active travail of memory and will, giving laws by which to bring the soul nearer to unity with God. The memory and understanding bring reflection

which leads to forgetting the supremacy of God. Therefore, do not reflect. Pleasure or contentment is the desire of the will. There are six kinds; temporal, natural, sensual, moral, supernatural and spiritual. The only pleasure is the glory of God. All others which do not serve this purpose are harmful.

The work is erudite, filled with numerous Biblical allusions and as is to be expected, hard to digest; but its place in the first rank of literature cannot be denied.

"Noche Escura del Alma" is an exposition of the "canciones" giving the road of perfect union with God as is possible in this life. Each line of each "cancion" is explained in detail. The first two give the effects of the sensual and spiritual life of man. The other six declare various and admirable effects of spiritual illumination and love of God.

The "Cántico Espiritual" is the spiritual discourse between Christ, the husband and the soul, the wife. In it the joyous results of prayer and contemplation with God are given. The thought begins where the soul begins to serve God until it reaches the last stages of perfection, which is spiritual matrimony. Three states must be gone through to reach this perfection: purgative, illuminative and unitive. The effects and properties of each must be described in detail. The last "Canciones" tell of the beatic state achieved only by the soul united with God. The "canciones" themselves are full of beautiful imagery that live in a realm all their own. The expositions are prolific, yet, considering the theme, very clear in parts. Each line is taken separately and its meaning thoroughly explained to the satisfaction of the author, if

not, of the reader. Like Santa Teresa, San Juan treats his only theme and only interest in each of his works. These canciones of the "Cantico Espiritual" are very much like the "Song of Songs" of Solomon.

In "Llama de Amor Viva", San Juan treats of the most intimate union of the soul with God. This work is most difficult to understand because it is so hopelessly spiritual. Like in the previous works, each stanza is first given as a whole, and the meaning thereof declared, after which each line is analyzed separately. The first "Cancion" is as follows:-

"¡Oh llama de amor viva
Que tiernamente hieres
De mi alma en el mas profundo centro!
Pues ya no eres esquiva
Acaba ya si quieres,
Rompes la tela de este dulce encuentro."(#).

Here the soul feels the glory of a flame of true love and begs for release from mortal life.

In the second "cancion":-

"¡Oh cauterio suave
Oh regalada llaga!
Oh mano blanda! Oh toque delicado
Que a vida eterna sabe
Y toda deuda paga!
Matando, muerte en vida la has trocado." (##)

(#) "Llama de Amor Viva" in Biblioteca de Autores Españoles Vol. 27 P. 217

(##) Same.

The trinity is symbolized with the powers and properties of each expressed. United they form the whole.

The third "cancion" is extremely hard to comprehend:

"¡Oh lamparas de fuego!
En cuyos respandores
Las profoundas cavernas del sentido
Que estaba escuro y ciego
Con estraños primores,
Color y luz dan junto a su querido."(#).

The general idea is the soul thanking God for the great reward that union with him brings, illuminating the senses of the soul, formerly dark without it.

The last "cancion" is the essence of ecstatic mysticism.

"¡Cuán manso y amoroso
Recuerdas en mi seno
Donde secretamente solo moras!
Y en tu aspirar sabroso,
De bien y gloria lleno
¡Cuán delicadamente me enamoras! (##)

What joy is herein expressed at having God within the soul! The last line is too aspirational for even Juan de la Cruz to attempt to elucidate.

"Instrucciones y Cautelas" are the nine forewarnings which must be followed by him who wishes to attain recognition. Three cautions are for the purpose of freeing the soul from the

(#) "Llama de Amor Viva" in Biblioteca de Autores Españoles Vol. 27. P. 217

(##) Same.

harm which the world can do. 1. To love all earthly beings equally. 2. To eradicate the desire for temporal pleasures. 3. To let no memory of earthly happenings clutter up the mind. Three more are for the purpose of freeing the soul from the Demon. 1. Never be moved to pity your fellowman. Do not recognize evil. 2. Reverence your prelate as a God. 3. Always be humble. Three more are for the purpose of conquering sensuality. 1. Always work-with brains or muscle - but keep working. 2. Never let displeasure take you away from your work. 3. Never do anything because it is pleasant. The doctrine preached is that of a stoic: an ascetic of great fortitude. Down with earthly Hedonism!

The "Avisos y Sentencias Espirituales" repeat in tabulated form the laws already set down by San Juan in his previous works. Their brevity of form lends clarity at times and this work, like all of his others, does not lack richness in figures of speech. "El cabello se ha de comenzar a peinar desde lo alto de la cabeza si queremos que esté clarecido; y todas nuestras obras se han de comenzar de lo mas alto del amor de Dios si queremos que sean puras y claras." (#)

The "Devotas Poesias" are written on various themes, always given in a stanza at the head of the poem. They are highly spiritual and therefore difficult to understand correctly; and often confusing. But they are simple, sincere, unaffected outpourings of a devout soul. The themes alone are evidence. This

(#) "Avisos y Sentecias Espirituales" in Biblioteca de Autores Españoles Vol. 27 P. 249.

one is on the soul in pain to see God, "vivo sin vivir en mi, y de tal manera espero, que muero porque no muero". (#). In like wise are they all. Many of them spiritually sensuous, so that we fear what Dr. Sigmund Freud would say, were he to psychoanalyze them.

The "Cartas Espirituales" are a collection of the letters written by him at various times to Santa Teresa, to various prioresses of Convents, and to nuns. He is always humble, devout, and ready to serve.

For eight hundred years Spain fought to expel all other creeds from within her confines and succeeded at last. Throughout all disintegrating forces, it is this religious element, fostered by combat to keep it supreme, that has kept Spain united. It is not strange, therefore, to find the predominance of this element throughout Spanish Literature.

Mysticism is universal. It is the name given to that phase of thought or feeling which tries to grasp the ultimate reality of things, and which has as its purpose actual communion with God. Its literature is sometimes hard to comprehend, but is beautiful.

The works of Teresa Sanchez Cepeda de Avila y Ahumada known as Teresa de Jesus are permeated with exquisite similes and metaphors, giving us the thoughts of Santa Teresa in unrivalled phraseology. The principles of Santa Teresa contain the entire philosophy of Spain. Her poetry is smybolical and mystical in the extreme.

The works of Juan de Yepes, known as Juan de la Cruz are highly spiritual and very beautiful.

Such is the nature of Spanish mystic literature as studied in the works of probably the two greatest mystics of that century, and perhaps of all time. Works of beauty in form and of unbelievable beauty in thought. Spiritual beings, they lived spiritual lives and consequently wrote a wealth of spiritual ideas. They bring the realization of the world in which they live. Let time be judge of worth; it weeds out the useless and evaluates the rank of the remaining. For four centuries this literature has lived; it will endure forever.

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